

A  
SERMON

Preached to the  
NATIVES

Of the  
City and County

OF  
WORCESTER

IN THE

Church of St LAURENCE JEWRY, at their  
SOLEMN MEETING, *June 28. 1681.*

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By GEORGE WALLS, M. A. and Student of  
*Christ Church Oxon.*

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L O N D O N,

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OF THE  
PROSECUTOR

IN THE

COURT OF COMMONS

IN THE

Nehem. VIII. at the 10<sup>th</sup> Verse.

*Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the  
sweet, and send portions to them for  
whom nothing is prepar'd.*

**T**HIS solemn Assembly and great Meeting, as exactly answers and fully complies with some great circumstances of this Feast of Tabernacles meant in my Text, in some of the highest reasons of it's institution and most admirable rules for its observation, as if *Moses* had been interested in the Original appointment, and *Nehemiah* and *Ezra* had directed us too how to keep the Feast. For if we consult *Deut. 16.* we shall find it design'd (though there were other causes of its institution) for the benefit of the Fatherless and Widow; where 'tis said, *Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles,---and thou shalt rejoyce in thy Feast, thou and the Stranger, and the Fatherless, and the Widow.* And that there might juster occasion be ministered for their rejoycing, the males were not to appear at this Feast before the Lord empty, but every man was to give as he was able, according to the  
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*blessing of the Lord his God, which he had given him. And on the last day of it, which in the 7<sup>th</sup> of S<sup>t</sup> John is called, The great day of the Feast; and amongst the Hebrews, The day of retention, from the People's being retain'd (as Fagius conjectures) in order to a publick collection; there was a stock of money raised, which though some Learned men have appropriated to the service of the Altar, and the buying in of the Sacrifices; may besides very reasonably be supposed meant for their support also, to whom portions were allotted in my Text. For though their interest was manifest in the contribution, supposing it was made for no other purpose than Provision of Sacrifices, for as much as they did feast on these at solemn times, and were equally concern'd with others in the atonements made by them: 'tis not improbable, but they might have a more particular interest and immediate share in the distribution, especially if we consider what care they had of their Poor, as appears (among other instances) from the לשכת חשבנים or *Conclave silentium*, as 'tis rendred by a late Author, a chest into which devout Persons were us'd privately to convey their Charities for the relief of Poor Children, one of which the *Talmud* tells us, was*

*Massiceth Schekalim* è versione  
 Joh. Wulferi,  
 p. 132.

was in every City; though something of the Jew mix'd it self with these best Actions of theirs: for we are there told, that only good mens Sons were to have relief thence. But if we read the foregoing part of the Chapter, we shall find a nearer resemblance betwixt these two Feasts still; for besides the Charitable intendment of it, they took a care to joyn Prayers to their Alms, and the devotion was as solemn as the Feast: *For the People gather'd* ver. 1. *themselves together as one man, and spake to Ezra the Priest who stood upon a Pulpit of wood, as appears from the 4. verse of the Chapter, and blessed the Lord the great God, and all the People answer'd Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bow'd their heads and worship'd the Lord, with their faces to the ground.* And it follows, that he read (or expounded) to them in the Book of the Law of God: that is, he pray'd and Preach'd before his Country-men at the Feast. The resemblance betwixt the two Feasts being thus stated, I shall consider,

1. The good influence and natural effects of such Meetings.

2. The advantages and usefulness such kind of Charities (the consequences of these meetings) have over all private ones.

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3. The

3. The great motives and encouragements we have to acts of charity and beneficence.

1. The good influence and natural effects of such Meetings.

First, Such Meetings give a weight and credit, revive and renew, as it were, the obligation, pay a respect, and are a kind of annual homage to that so considerable relation of Neighbourhood, under which God chose to represent men, when he propos'd them to one another as the objects of Universal and perfect love, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*. And if the Duties of mutual love, kindness, assistance and good Offices, which are due to Neighbourhood, were but well perform'd; all the disorders of the world would be cur'd, and mischiefs prevented: men would live at perfect peace, and happiness would over-spread the face of the Universe: since all the harm and inconveniences men receive, are from those that are near them, their Neighbours. And therefore the keeping up the Authority of this relation of Neighbourhood, is no small Duty, no ordinary encouragement of virtue and preservation of Peace. And though the Athenians were so ill natur'd, as to leave the rest of mankind out of their Prayers; yet they could

could not forbear to desire the blessings of Heaven on those who liv'd within the Confinnes of their own Country, *O Jupiter let thy rain fall upon all the good Lands of the Athenians.*

Secondly, These *agapes* or Love-Feasts were the places and occasions wherein Christians in the first Ages of the Church, grew into one Body; one affection, one Friendship. And the growth and establishment of Religion seems to derive much thence, for as much as such Meetings were frequent and easier to be had, than other Religious Assemblies; because they gave less jealousy and scandal to the Heathen Persecutors, and did not appear to have such tendency towards the introducing of a new Religion; Feasting being what they themselves practised, as well as the Christians. And that they were to no great degree alarm'd by this Christian practice, seems probable from the long continuance of these Feasts, which we are told were in use till near two hundred years after Christ; and then too, were laid aside upon prudential considerations, and only by consent. And though corruptions and abuses at length crept into them, and *Satan came and presented himself amongst the Sons of God* at these Feasts too, those miscarriages were the effect of their other  
conver-

conversation, and these spots not contracted by, but appearing only in their Feasts of Charity. For the quality of some, and reputation of others, and the great security that so numerous a Body gives to it self, are such strong Guards against disorder and irregularity in such Conventions, that the same causes that make this, on several accounts, a great, do, in some sort, make it a Religious Assembly too. This works off the ill influences of a private conversation, and the sowness of none at all: roots up or stifles those seeds of prejudice and dislike, that insensibly slide into our natures, corrupt our spirits, and darken our minds, which are equally cherished by bad, or no company: masters all these diseases of the mind, by the powerful charms of a pleasant, and the strong diversion of various conversation. This is the Musick that cures the evil Spirit of every *Saul* among us, which the Jewish Scholiasts tell us was fundamentally nothing else but a sowness and distracted temper of mind, arising from the dregs of Melancholy, grief and malice; and then joy and cheerfulness seem so natural to, and becoming of such solemnities, that in the Feast of Tabernacles *the Levites still'd the People, that wept when they heard the words of the Law, saying,*

*Nehem. 8. 11.*

*saying, hold your Peace, for the day is Holy, neither be ye griev'd :* as if not to rejoyce in it, were a pollution of the holiness of the day. This gratifies and solaces all good natures, and sweetens and reforms the ill ; for compliance with such a circumstance of time, and the decency of suiting ones self to the mode and Fashion of a Feast of Love, requires him to bring thither a good Humour, that hath none of his own : and the very dressing himself, though but for the occasion, may make him like the Habit, and keep on the so becoming guise. Fasting makes men good solitary Christians ; but when they are to be moulded and cemented into one Body, one Society, Feasting most effectually operates towards it. Refreshing of the Spirits with Wine, and the good things God hath given us, the mirth and rejoycing of such meetings, abates the inequalities of mens minds, smooths the ruggedness of their tempers, and makes them fit to piece and fall in with each other. This is the most likely means to enlarge inclination, break up and lay open all sordid enclosures of the soul ; to take away all the base confinements and determinations of our love ; to give that generous affection its due latitude and liberty, not suffering it

it to be pent up within the little compass of a Family, or to contract it self into the narrow interests of Blood. For Love as other fires, the farther it spreads, the greater and warmer it grows; he that would shut up this flame, endangers to put it out. This furnishes it with numerous objects, stretches it out to a considerable part of the world: a due and proper exercise of that love that is to become universal, and a suitable Preface to its enlargement to all mankind. And methinks there needs no better argument of the usefulness of such public conversation and meetings as these, than to consider the ill impressions, and dangerous consequences of a solitary and Monastick institution; witness those Seminaries of ill nature and mischief, the Cloysters; where, by conversing with very few, and those the worst of men, themselves; they, by being much alone, have arriv'd to such sower and malicious tempers, that it becomes unsafe for the world they should ever be in company: the narrow Cell becoming as frequently the hole of the Asp, as the Retirement of the Christian. But God grant we may never so mistake the Prophet, become such *sucking Children*, so foolish as to *play there*, arrive to such a dangerous degree  
of

of Familiarity, as to *put our hand on that Cockatrice den*. Nor is that black temper of Soul (which is naturally acquir'd in those retirements) more acceptable to God than 'tis to Man, as being directly opposite and running counter to the Gospel spirit; and therefore the Jews glancing at that contempt which the Wise-man in *Ecclesiastes* casts upon mirth and laughter, tell us, that the Shechinah or holy Spirit resides not with dull sadness, but with due and innocent cheerfulness; and observe that when the minstrel play'd, the hand of God came upon *Elisha* and he prophesied; and they have a common Tradition, that *Jacob* prophesied not, while his grief and melancholy for the loss of his Son *Joseph* remain'd on him. And we shall find that the great disturbers of the World (like the more terrible and frightful appearance of those that are once departed) have been such, as have first forsaken and left it, (as they please to stile it.) And in one sence they seem to have renounc'd and cast it off, to disown their interest in, and relation to it, in that they endeavour to destroy it. If a sharp and Bloody persecution be to be carry'd on; the Covent is sure to act a large part there; and the Monks head or hand is always concern'd in the Mas-

C

sacre.

*Gem. Schab.*  
c. 2.

2 Kings c. 3.  
v. 15.

Rom. 3. 15,  
16, 17.

Mornens Hist.

Papat. p. 385.

sacre. *Their Feet are swift to shed Blood, destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of Peace have they not known. If unheard of Butcheries are to be acted upon the Waldenses, the Dominicans are made the Inquisitors, and then they are burnt alive in heaps, as appears from the publick Records of Avignon. And Jacques Clement had possibly, prudently resisted the force of the Principles of his Bloody Religion, as some others do, had not the Monk been acted by the influences of his education, and by the same institution that disposes to hate ones Brother, become a Murderer of his Prince. Let not us therefore forbear the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is. For besides the secret Springs and movements, that, on such occasions, dispose and turn our looks and hearts towards each other, and somewhat arising from the whole and Body, which the parts and members seem not to have brought thither, (it frequently happening with men as it doth with some Chymical Liquors, that ferment better, and acquire nobler and more useful qualities by the mixture :) Besides (I say) the obvious tendencies of such Assemblies to continue and keep warm friendship, it appears a suitable means*  
of

of reconciliation, and begetting it where 'tis not ; the method and progress of which may possibly be thus stated and accounted for : That the Laws of Decency and most approv'd Rules of Conduct at such solemnities, require men to leave at home the rougher part of themselves, and bring nothing with them into such publick and friendly Meetings, but what is suitable to the ends of them, Love and Friendship. And though we should suspect that there might perhaps be some hypocrisy in this civility and outward smoothness ; yet this too may not seldom make way for kinder thoughts, and be an introduction to a real good will and lasting Friendship. For that which keeps many men at a distance, is nothing but their appearing neglect of each other in their outward conversation ; and they return to the ease and satisfaction of a good understanding, as soon as civility and frankness on either side open but a way to it. And whosoever believes another in earnest, does very naturally and justly treat and receive him, as if he truly were so ; which treatment seldom fails to make him really become what he before mistook him for. So that the embraces that proceed only from the rules of decency and

H. Thorndike  
of Rel. Assen.  
c. 3.

civil behaviour, may here improve into lasting kindness, and the Table become a snare only to a firm and inviolable Friendship. And a Learned man is of Opinion that the reason why the Jews were so little inclinable to Idolatry after the Captivity, to which before it, they had such strong propensions, that neither punishment nor Prophecy extraordinary could with-hold them from running into it, was, That after the Captivity their Synagogues were far more numerous than before it (but that they had then some, appears from the 74<sup>th</sup> Psalm ) and so their accessses to each other frequent and easy ; and that what operated in them to the begetting some Love of God, should yet leave that of their Brother in its former Ebb and Coldness, must not be resolv'd into any insufficiency in the means to unite them, but to some irreconcilableness in their tempers, and hidden causes, that would they should longer wander and go astray, not yet be adopted into the Family of Love: Which brings me to speak,

2. Of the advantages and usefulness which such kind of Charities (the consequences of these Meetings) have over all private ones.

Now solemn and publick practices of any  
virtue

virtue have these two good effects above private and solitary.

First, That it recommends this virtue which they have own'd in publick more strongly to every man of that Society in his private practice, and engages him more effectually in the observance of it.

Secondly, In that it recommends it more powerfully to others.

First, It recommends this virtue which they have own'd in publick more strongly to every man of that Society in his private practice. For besides that the Original and first reason, all the former motives that prevail'd with any man to joyn in the publick practice, and solemn profession of that virtue, are still in force, and retain their perswasive efficacy; he has fresh encouragements, and new motives, from the approbation, consent and testimony of all that were interested with him in the open acknowledgment, as so many distinct evidences of its laudableness and necessity: so that this truth is propos'd to him, not as the Opinion of a Doctor, but the Act of a Council. He has the advantage of many circumstances to bring it home to, and root it in his memory, and as many arguments

to

to recommend it to his reason and practice. There's his own publick Act, a standing Record against him, if he should disown or neglect it; and his own vote for it, registred to his condemnation.

Secondly, In that it recommends it more powerfully to others: such deliberate Acts of great and considerable Societies, give the Virtue, they thus solemnly promote, authority in the world. Virtue has always reason on her side, but fashion and number often beat her out of countenance, and Conscience is not always stout enough to bear up against a multitude. Though it be a thousand witnessses within, 'tis not always able to stand as many contrary examples without. Let virtue have but the protection of any number of men, who profess publickly to owne, and do really practise her; and all is done almost that is needful to make her prevail in the World. The sentiments of mens minds, the repose and quiet of their Consciences, reputation and esteem, all vote for her: nay ease and Riches too are on her side. 'Tis almost only fashion, and a custom of following examples; which mislead men into vice, and mischief that attends it. Such publick Acts therefore of virtue as are at  
this

this Meeting perform'd, are more valued in the example, than the performance it self : and what's here said of all other virtues, is much more true of that leading and universal one, that root of all other, Charity ; and they that will but return a charitable thought, for your charitable Actions, will have reason to think, that you who part with your money only for Duty, for Religion, for Virtues sake, will not keep any chargeable vices (as they almost all are, but the opposire to Charity) and at a dear rate purchase misery here and hereafter. Besides, these solemn and publick Charities have this farther advantage, that in them the good man gives with greater security, and better assurance, that he pursues the true ends of Charity. For in private and solitary distributions, through a too easie compassion he may believe too soon, or through a too stubborn distrust he may perhaps not at all ; and so is liable to mistake, to the encouragement of Sin, or continuing of Misery. Nor will the conveying it by the hands of any other single person, alter the case, or remove the inconvenience ; for he has the same difficulties to encounter, and is equally liable to miscarry with the former. And then the Casuist too, does so  
perplex

*proferus ex Or-  
chot Zdikin.*

perplex this admirable Duty, in our private executions of it, making the labour of Love so great, by too nicely stating its qualifications, and clogging it with too Critical Rules of secrecy; that sometimes the scruple swallows up the virtue; and by too exact a care that it should not be seen, it becomes frequently not to be felt neither: as may appear from the practice of some Jews, a late Writer mentions, that out of a too nice regard to privacy, were us'd to drop money out of their garments for the Poor, not considering it might be lost, or a rich man pick it up. But these inconveniences are all remedi'd in our solemn and publick Collection; for here when Love has once open'd, there's the Wisdom and Counsel of the whole Body, to direct and guide my hand. And whereas in private Charities, the shining of the good Work frequently destroy's it; here the light and bright appearance of it, is the excellency of the virtue. The Trumpet that always sounds when these publick Alms are done, may raise some that are cold and dead, and provoke them to Love. The left hand may here know what the right does, and the World the liberality of both; and I not lose my reward.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The great motives and encouragements we have to acts of Charity and Beneficence, and the obligations we lie under to distribute and send portions to the Poor. And this will appear if we consider,

1. The Advantages that arise to our selves by so doing.

2. The Honour that is done to God.

3. The benefits that accrue to our Brother.

1. The Advantages that arise to our selves by so doing. And here we seem to be mov'd by all the springs to generous and great, or what ever may encline us to good and vertuous undertakings; and to be engag'd in the performance, by the united influence of Pleasure, Profit, Honour and Duty. The latter of which is too evident, and each of them would be too tedious to be insisted on. I shall only therefore briefly mention Pleasure and Profit. These Acts of Beneficence and Charity, are attended with,

( 1. ) Pleasure and Delight. And therefore Dr. *Hammond* calls the charitable man a Sensualist. For the workings of nature are so strong, the pangs of compassion so violent, and 'tis so difficult and uneasy to *hide our selves from our own flesh*, that to do good and

to distribute, is a Sacrifice with which the Offerer, as well as God is, certainly, well pleas'd. The object of misery is so moving, that the soundings of my own bowels, are silenc'd with as much satisfaction, as my Brothers are refresh'd : and whilst the Churl that says, Shall I take my Bread and my Water and my Flesh and give it ? whilst this cruel man troubleth his own flesh, the merciful man doth good to his own Soul.

1 Sam. 25. 11.

Prov. 11. 17.

(2.) With Profit. For when God's pleas'd to recommend the Duty, he thinks fit to address himself to the charitable man in terms that look like encouraging to a gainful profession, rather than pressing an indispensable obligation ; stating it in words expressive of the most direct methods of thriving and good husbandry, such as lending, watering, and sowing. And then he cannot be defeated of his harvest ; For though the Heaven over his Head should be brass, and the Earth that is under him should be Iron (as we had very lately almost seen) though the Clouds should drop no fatness, yet the liberal Soul shall be fat. He scattereth and yet increaseth ; hath sow'd plentifully, and therefore shall reap so. And though God, that he may administer all kind of encouragement to this Duty, is pleas'd sometimes so to order

Deut. 28. 23.

Prov. 11. 25.

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the flight of those riches, the good man gives wings to, as to direct their motion to the place it began; and to convey back into their Sacks the Money of those, that like *Joseph's* Brethren, lay it out in Corn, to relieve the Famine, and feed the hungry of the Land, as appears from the not failing of some Cruses of Oyl, and Barrels of Meal, that several Prophets have had Cakes of, and did eat of, many daies: and frequent instances from History; as the gold convey'd back to *Epiphanius* his Steward, and the bag of Meal that was thrown by an unknown hand into the good Widows Houle, in the Siege of *Rachel*; when she had not one handful left in her Barrel, that she might eat with her Children and die. Though he is pleas'd sometimes thus to reward acts of Charity, either for a declaration of his all-sufficiency, the addition of a fresh motive to vertue, or the justifying of his Providence to such as are too apt to distrust; that can allow no other recompence, but down-right payment, and return almost in kind. It does not suit with the bounty of the great Benefactor (that has so many ways of rewarding our services) to confine himself to this one: to send the good man back the very Present that he made

him; and make him suspect he refus'd his Offering. If he should think fit not to reward him with the Fruits of Corn-Fields, Olive-yards or Vineyards; he can give him a cheerful countenance without them, and put gladness into his heart; more than in the time when his Corn and Wine and Oyl encreas'd. There may be abundance of Peace, when there's but moderate plenty; and he may sanctifie, when he does not enlarge my possessions. My recompence may consist in degrees, when it does not in number; and when he pleases to contract the multitude, he may bless me in the greatness of his mercies: For there is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by few. He sometimes exchanges and gives me more suitable blessings; and I hope the kindness is not the less, because he adds the bounties of his Wisdom to those of his Love. Although the Fig-tree shall not blossome, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the stock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls: though all those blessings are deny'd me, I may be yet bless'd with the Prophets resolution, in the following words, I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.

Wisdom

1 Sam. 14. 6.

Hab. 3. 17.

Vers. 18.

Wisdom (which is but a perfect Charity) may more liberally dispense to me out of her right hand, when she's sparing with her left, and length of days may supply the want of some degrees of Riches and Honour. And this righteousness or Charity (for the same word signifies them both) *bath so much the promise of the life that now is, as well as that to come,* that it has not only frequently been continu'd, but sometimes miraculously recall'd too, for the more absolute completion of the promise: for Saint *Chrysostome* says expressly, that the force of the Alms-deeds which *Dorcas* did, made her capable of that great and extraordinary favour, of being restor'd to life. And Saint *Cyprian* gives the very same reason why God was pleas'd to honour her with this miracle. *Chryf. in Gen. Homil. 55.*  
 But then the charitable mans great Estate is in reversion, where not only the labour of Love, but the faith that work'd by it, and always accompanied it, in its trust in God, and reliance on his promises, will plentifully be rewarded. *Cyp. de Op. & Elemos.*  
 For he has sow'd to the Spirit, and therefore of the Spirit shall reap life everlasting. *Gal. 6. 8.* His wise improvement of the unrighteous Mammon has strengthened his interest in the other World, made him friends there, which, when he fails,

Cyp. de Mortal.

fails, will receive him into everlasting Habitations. And the Fathers were so perswaded of the charitable man's share in those many mansions, that Saint Cyprian encouraging his Brethren to die cheerfully, by an argument drawn from the blest Society, they would be admitted to; when he thinks fit to mention but five eminent orders of those glorified ones, he assigns one of them to the Charitable and Merciful, and ranks them with no worse company than the Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, and Virgins.

2. The Motives and encouragements we have to acts of Charity and Beneficence will appear, if we consider the Honour that is done to God.

When in compliance with his commands we distribute our substance, and part with our beloved treasure, we allow his Dominion and confess his Authority, declare that *the Earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof.* We magnifie his bounty and liberal provision for us, by thinking it sufficient for our selves and others; we acknowledge his veracity, shew we dare trust him and believe him faithful that hath promised. And in the Apostolick Constitutions, amongst other very severe Charges, the uncharitable man

man is said to be an Infidel, and that such a one doth not believe God\*. In the 14<sup>th</sup> of the *Proverbs*, the Wise-man makes Charity the great proof and evidence of honouring God; where 'tis said, *He that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.* For this is in regard to their Father, to adopt his Sons, and become Guardians to his Family. This takes off all Scandal from his Providence, and reflection from his government, by furnishing them with peace and quiet, that could never reason themselves into it: that are of so little, or dull sense, that they could never see how good the Lord is, unless, in the bounty of others, they taste it too. For narrowness and distraction of mind furnish the Poor man with so few, and disorderly, and misery with so bad thoughts, that they are either too short and dark to discover the right, and reach the foundation of Gods Dominion; or too corrupt and perverted, to allow the distinguishing exercise of it. And though more considering heads have stumbled at this, and the best of men had well nigh slipped: yet Charity herein can out-do Philosophy, and great degrees of Religion too; and, by the relief of a liberal hand, reconcile ignorant heads, as well as empty bellies to the  
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\*ὁ δὲ τοῦτο  
 ἔργον οὐκ ἐστὶν  
 τιμωρία. Ζο-  
 nar. Const. A-  
 post. l. 4. cap.  
 3. vici quare.

acknowledgment of the good providence and bounty of the Almighty, who dispenses liberally to them, by the hands, and out of the portions of others. So that he who charitably gives them their dayly Bread, leads them not into this Temptation, but delivers them from Evil. And I am sure he properly honours God with his substance, that by it breaks off his own, or prevents anothers sins. So that there will be glory to God on high, when there is good will towards men.

3. Another motive to acts of Charity and Beneficence, is, The benefit that accrues to our Brother thereby.

Now though to free one from the uneasiness of having the keen and eager appetites of nature awak'd, and not satisfied; to rescue from the shame of nakedness, and smart of pain, seems a sufficient motive to, and worthy exercise of our Charity; and the weight of the burden is not only reason enough to encline one that has senses to desire, but also him that has compassion to endeavour its removal: yet the beauty and true value of Beneficence, and Love then only appears, if we consider that every instance of it to the Body, frequently reaches the Soul too; being usually as sovereign  
a remedy

a remedy to the sin of the one, as the sufferings of the other: and therefore we find, that their conversion was the frequent effect of our Saviours kindness to those he heal'd, and restor'd to their sight; as may appear from the two blind men in the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Matt.* for the Text says, *Jesus had compassion on them, and touch'd their Eyes, and immediately they receiv'd their sight and they follow'd him; as Bartimeus did in the 10<sup>th</sup> of Mark:* The miracle of mercy being to them the truest evidence of his Divinity, and the power of God to their Salvation. For distress and want do naturally im-bitter the Spirit, sower the temper, and indispose the mind for God and Duty. Which probably is the reason, why the Hebrew Doctors (amongst other qualifications for the residence of the Spirit of Prophecy) require, that he on whom it rests, should be a rich and great man. For when the miserable and calamitous Wretch has cry'd, and behold there is none to help, no charitable hand to unloose the heavy burthen, and let this oppressed go free: How is he dispos'd to fulfil *Isaiah's Prophecy* Isai. 8. 21. concerning the behaviour of some others in the like distress; and when he shall pass through the land hardly bestead and hungry,

to fret himself, and curse his King, and his God, and look upwards? How inclin'd to quarrel at his Father (and perhaps question his being so) that has bestow'd so large patrimonies on those he is told are his Brethren, (without any kindness, the proof and evidence of that relation) when he is dis-inherited? For with how unpleasing a relish, must he feed on the husks, and how little thankful is he apt to be to him that furnishes the coarse entertainment, when he never *spent* any part of his substance in riotous living, and his hereditary beggery forbid him ever to be the prodigal Son? How hard is it for one so early and so constantly miserable, to lie quiet, or innocent in the Dust, not to contract pollution there: for if he must always feed with the Swine, 'tis odds but he goes farther with them yet, and wallows in the mire; and so the destruction of the poor is his poverty. Nor will he easily, or scarce innocently, digest the scorn of this mock-subjection, when he is told, that all things are put under his feet, all Sheep and Oxen, and the beasts of the field; and yet knows not how to prevail for one Fleece or Morsel, of these his own so large possessions, to warm his back or cheer his Bowels. And if this  
Beggard

PROV. 10. 15.

Beggar that lies at the Rich man's Gate, instead of having his Sores lick'd and gently treated, in order to their being heal'd, shall meet only with the Teeth of the dogs, that shall tear and make them bleed afresh; his rags and nakedness become more so, by thorough handling and coarse treatment of those that should have cover'd it. If this ill and deform'd sight (that Charity might have made a pleasanter and more delightful prospect) shall be injuriously chas'd thence: in this bitterness of his Soul he may curse God and die; and his Blood do that which the Poor man was not permitted to do, lye at the Rich mans Door. Whereas if some compassionate Soul had timely and seasonably come in to his relief, some merciful Ear had been open to his crys, before he repin'd into rage and exclamation. If some charitable hand had been reach'd out to him, it had prevented his sinking and perishing for ever; and had possibly reconcil'd him to his condition and his God together. So that our Brother may be in a sort *redeem'd with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold*; and the unrighteous Mammon be a means of his Salvation.

What then remains but that we heartily

pursue the design and end of our coming together, call in all the motives and considerations that can create or maintain Love. That there be no root in us bearing gall, and that all bitterness be put away. That Ephraim envy not Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; but that what St. Paul commended in his *Thessalonians*, the *Charity of every man may toward each other abound*. Let us wear this great badge of our profession, and make it the highest evidence of the sincerity of our Religion, by giving our Hearts both to God and our Brother, for 'tis his right also. And after the wonderful Union of God and man, let not that of one man with another be unusual or surprizing, let Love as well as Faith have its mysteries, and as here three, so let there many become one. And since no one thinks it safe to let his last Sun go down upon his wrath, how many soever he has imprudently suffer'd to set so; if we must die Friends, why don't we live so? If my last affections will, and must then embrace my Brothers hand, when the strong convulsions of mine, can hardly let it go? if that be necessary to support me, when my Feet are *stumbling on the dark mountaions*, and the entrance of the Grave, Why do I take hold on it so late? Why should

should my heart and affections be dispos'd of like my Goods and Estate, and my Love that would be so much more acceptable to God, and useful to my Brother, in a gift, be reserv'd for a Legacy.

And if the being born within such a circuit of ground, be a reason (as really it is) for men to enter into a more intimate Society and conversation one with another; how much more reason have they to unite, who are not only born in the same Country, but have one common Interest (as all true English-men have) both of Laws and Religion? And therefore we have now the strongest motives to become as one man, and with united hearts bear up against the common danger, that threatens us, both from the unwearied contrivances and designs of the Papist, and the growing greatness of any ambitious Popish Neighbours. Nor should distances amongst Protestants, that differ in lesser matters, make them disown one another in this common concern; more than being born in different Parishes, or at some miles distance, makes any one lose the priviledg of this friendly Society of *Worcester-shire* men, or causes any unkind divisions amongst you. And if *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate* were contented to become

become Friends, in order to strengthen themselves to effect no better a purpose of theirs, than the Crucifixion of Christ; methinks we that are Members of the same Body, might imitate the prudence, though not the guilt of their policy; and joyn forces in the just, and quite contrary design of opposing his pretended Vicar, who threatens us with Fire and Faggot. And did not a greater degree of perverseness rule us in our Religious Interests, than does in our Civil; we might as easily unite (notwithstanding our differences in Opinion) against the disturbers of our common Peace, and the Enemies of our Religion, as we do against those of our Trade. Nor is it improbable, but joyning together against these troublers of the World, may tend to a better composure amongst ourselves, as fellow Souldiers frequently become true and lasting friends. Were the Sea breaking in upon us, men who lay within the reach of the danger, would cease to pursue their private differences and lesser quarrels, and all joyn to keep out the common inundation. Popery has as little mercy as the Sea, however it may look smooth, and seem gentle as the yielding Water; where it prevails it swallows all. In this deluge, none of us shall  
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be thought the Sons of *Noah*, but off-springs of the accursed Race: a Heretick is a beast too unclean to have any place in their Ark. And if so different Nations, and that understood not one another, made no mutiny in *Hannibals Army*; but readily fell in with each other, in order to humble the pride, and chastise the insolence of old *Rome*, (which was yet far more tolerable and less oppressive than that of the new) methinks our Brethren that speak almost the same language with us already, should find no difficulty to joyn our Army in order to a mutual defence: and that there should no *Hanno's* be in our *Carthage* to keep back our supplies, and hinder the success of our Battels. And since the *Ephramites* were so highly in- Judg. 12. 1. cens'd, at their not being called in by *Jephtha*, in his Expedition against the Children of *Ammon*; and were so ambitious of assisting in the War against that Idolatrous Nation, that they resolv'd to burn his House, that rob'd them of the Glory of fighting this Battle of the Lord: 'twere to be wish'd, that our dissenting Brethren would so far imitate their Zeal, as to accept our invitation to unite with us, against the no less abominable Idolatries of *Rome*.

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Let us therefore invite the Almighty's protection, by shewing our willingness not to be destroy'd, and our readiness to save each other. Let the circulation of love and friendship be as free in this great Body, and convey it self as kindly to every part, as the Blood do's in the natural, that the extreamest parts may be warm too. And let those *uncomely parts* of us, the poor; deform'd through misery and Rags, by our bounty and Charity receive more abundant *comelinesf.* Then you have Solomons warrant to go *your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth your works.* Your feasting need not like that of *Job's Sons* be aton'd by a Sacrifice, but is it self an acceptable one. This sanctifies your Meeting, and prepares you for the solemn Assembly of the first-born, hallows your rejoycing here, and compleats it hereafter; gives you a part in that new Song, which you'll be able to learn, as being of the number of those that were redeem'd from the Earth. Now the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledg and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost be with you all now and evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.

